

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY / MIDDLE EAST UPDATE
June 16 - 23, 2011

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1. [President Obama on the Way Forward in Afghanistan](#) (06-22-2011)

President Obama [addressed the nation](#) from the East Room of the White House June 22 about the way forward in Afghanistan and his plan to remove 10,000 American troops from Afghanistan by the end of this year, and a total of 33,000 by next summer.

The President reflected on the difficult decision he made in December of 2009 to order 30,000 additional troops into Afghanistan, and keeping his commitment to begin the drawdown of troops this summer:

By the time I took office, the war in Afghanistan had entered its seventh year. But al Qaeda's leaders had escaped into Pakistan and were plotting new attacks, while the Taliban had regrouped and gone on the offensive. Without a new strategy and decisive action, our military commanders warned that we could face a resurgent al Qaeda and a Taliban taking over large parts of Afghanistan.

For this reason, in one of the most difficult decisions that I've made as President, I ordered an additional 30,000 American troops into Afghanistan. When I announced this surge at West Point, we set clear objectives: to refocus on al Qaeda, to reverse the Taliban's momentum, and train Afghan security forces to defend their own country. I also made it clear that our commitment would not be open-ended, and that we would begin to draw down our forces this July.

Tonight, I can tell you that we are fulfilling that commitment. Thanks to our extraordinary men and women in uniform, our civilian personnel, and our many coalition partners, we are meeting our goals. As a result, starting next month, we will be able to remove 10,000 of our troops from

Afghanistan by the end of this year, and we will bring home a total of 33,000 troops by next summer, fully recovering the surge I announced at West Point. After this initial reduction, our troops will continue coming home at a steady pace as Afghan security forces move into the lead. Our mission will change from combat to support. By 2014, this process of transition will be complete, and the Afghan people will be responsible for their own security. We're starting this drawdown from a position of strength.

The President also emphasized the important role the Afghan government must play in securing their nation and depriving al Qaeda of a safe haven:

The goal that we seek is achievable, and can be expressed simply: No safe haven from which al Qaeda or its affiliates can launch attacks against our homeland or our allies. We won't try to make Afghanistan a perfect place. We will not police its streets or patrol its mountains indefinitely. That is the responsibility of the Afghan government, which must step up its ability to protect its people, and move from an economy shaped by war to one that can sustain a lasting peace. What we can do, and will do, is build a partnership with the Afghan people that endures — one that ensures that we will be able to continue targeting terrorists and supporting a sovereign Afghan government.

President Obama also discussed the importance of focusing on nation building here at home, while upholding the beliefs and principles on which our nation was founded abroad:

In all that we do, we must remember that what sets America apart is not solely our power — it is the principles upon which our union was founded. We're a nation that brings our enemies to justice while adhering to the rule of law, and respecting the rights of all our citizens. We protect our own freedom and prosperity by extending it to others. We stand not for empire, but for self-determination. That is why we have a stake in the democratic aspirations that are now washing across the Arab world. We will support those revolutions with fidelity to our ideals, with the power of our example, and with an unwavering belief that all human beings deserve to live with freedom and dignity.

Above all, we are a nation whose strength abroad has been anchored in opportunity for our citizens here at home. Over the last decade, we have spent a trillion dollars on war, at a time of rising debt and hard economic times. Now, we must invest in America's greatest resource — our people. We must unleash innovation that creates new jobs and industries, while living within our means. We must rebuild our infrastructure and find new and clean sources of energy. And most of all, after a decade of passionate debate, we must recapture the common purpose that we shared at the beginning of this time of war. For our nation draws strength from our differences, and when our union is strong no hill is too steep, no horizon is beyond our reach.

America, it is time to focus on nation building here at home.

In this effort, we draw inspiration from our fellow Americans who have sacrificed so much on our behalf. To our troops, our veterans and their families, I speak for all Americans when I say that we will keep our sacred trust with you, and provide you with the care and benefits and opportunity that you deserve.

[President Obama on the Way Forward in Afghanistan](#)
[Briefing on Obama's Plan for Afghanistan Troop Drawdown](#)

2. Update on Middle East Peace Process (06-21-2011)

U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson
Senior Administration Official on an Update of the Middle East Peace Process

OPERATOR: Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time, all participants are in a listen-only mode until the question-and-answer session. At that time, to ask your questions, please press *1 on your phone. Today's conference call is being recorded. If you have any objections, you may disconnect your lines at this time.

I would now like to turn the conference over to your host. We have Mr. Mark Toner. Sir, you may begin.

MR. TONER: Thank you so much and thanks to everyone for joining us this morning. We're very fortunate to have with us today Senior Administration Official, who's been traveling in the region, and we thought it would be helpful to give you all just an update on his travels, his trips, his meetings, and an update on U.S. efforts to advance Middle East peace.

So without further ado, I will hand it over to Senior Administration Official, but just — I'm sorry, just one — briefly before I do that, for the attribution on this, he should be henceforth known as senior administration official. This call is on background.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yeah, thank you. Thank you very much, Mark. Well, I'm calling in from Cairo, and I can go over a little bit of the itinerary that I've been following. But I thought it would be helpful to just step back with a few points at the beginning here to remind us of what it is we're working off of.

As you know, last month, the President made a significant set of remarks on the region. They included a component on the pursuit of peace between Israelis and Arabs, which he described as a cornerstone of our approach to the region. The President acknowledged that expectations have gone unmet, but he also made clear that regional developments make a peace that ends the conflict and resolves all claims more urgent than ever.

I don't think I need to go through today what the specific elements were that he described, but on their basis, we are working with the parties in coordination with the international community and the Quartet to continue the difficult task of closing the gaps between the parties on how we proceed in a productive way. Our goal in this effort is to — now is to work with the parties toward negotiations on the basis of the President's remarks. We're consulting the parties, the Quartet, Arab officials and other supporters on the best way to proceed.

As you know, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators recently visited Washington and met with Secretary of State Clinton and other senior officials. Last week, Dennis Ross from the Washington and I followed up and met with Prime Minister Netanyahu and his advisors, and then I stayed on in the region and I've met with President Abbas, with the lead negotiator Saeb Erekat, Nabil Abu Rudaina, and others on the Palestinian side, and I've also met with the Jordanian Foreign Minister Nasser Judeh, Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil Elaraby this afternoon, the head of the Egyptian intelligence service General Mawafi, and I have other meetings later today at the Arab League. Now, I've also met on this trip with the special envoys of Norway and Japan and will meet with the Quartet envoys on Friday in Brussels to review where we are. Dennis and I plan another round of discussions with the Israeli leadership on June 22 and 23, and I'll be following up with the Palestinians at the earliest opportunity after that.

Now, our focus is on seeing how we can get over the current impasse and back to the negotiating table. This is a difficult task. The circumstances on the ground and the gaps between the parties are challenging. I hope that with persistence and goodwill the parties can move this effort forward in a productive way. But ultimately, it's up to the Israelis and Palestinians to take action. As the President said, no peace can be imposed on them, but endless delay won't make the problem go away. The status quo is unsustainable and return to negotiations, in our view, is the only way forward. But they have to make the decisions on how to do so. We're encouraging the parties and seeking to create an environment in which these difficult decisions can be made with the help of friends and allies.

I might stop there, Mark, and turn it over to questions so we can have a good give and take.

MR. TONER: Great. Thanks so much, Senior Administration Official. And operator, we are ready for questions. Just one more reminder about the ground rules here, Senior Administration Official is with us today as a senior administration official on background. Thanks.

OPERATOR: And as a reminder, to ask your questions, please press * then 1, on your phone. One moment, sir. The first question comes from Kim Ghattas. Your line is open.

QUESTION: Good morning, Mark and Senior Administration Official. Thank you for doing this call.

I was wondering, Senior Administration Official, whether you could tell us a little bit more about what it is you're telling the parties that might convince them now that they should go back to the negotiating table that wasn't enough to get them to the negotiating table before. And also, is it really about bringing them to the negotiating table or about getting them into some kind of process that will help avert a showdown in September?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thanks, Kim, and nice to hear from you. Well, I don't want to get into the specifics of our diplomatic exchanges, particularly since we're smack in the middle of a trip and with the effort. But I think that it's important that the parties see that there are interests of their own that are best served by resuming the negotiating effort. They need to see that it's in their own interests. They have their own politics, of course, and will be drawing their own conclusions. But we believe that the President's speech has offered a firm foundation that the parties ultimately will be able to find from that a way forward. And frankly, it's obvious that we have some deadlines out there in September that have been talked about, but we ourselves are focused on how we can use this speech as the best way forward — not as a tactic and not as a process, but in order to get to the end state of a two-state outcome.

I think this Administration's had a consistent point that process for process's sake will get us nowhere, and delay for delay's sake similarly takes us nowhere. It's time for some tough decisions on how we can move this process, move this effort ahead to an end state.

MR. TONER: Next question.

OPERATOR: This question comes from Natasha Mozgovaya. Your line is open.

QUESTION: Hello, thank you for doing this call. I'm just a little bit confused where you see Hamas in this equation, because it was told that the Israelis are not expected to negotiate with the Hamas,

and we saw it in (inaudible) between (inaudible) and Hamas, but I mean, still we are talking about deadlines and they are still there and there is an agreement. So where are (inaudible) in these talks?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Yeah. Well, Natasha, it's a very good question. Obviously, the reconciliation issue is a significant one. It raises profound questions that the President himself has mentioned in his speech. The Palestinian leaders will need to answer: How can one negotiate with a party that's shown itself unwilling to recognize the other party's right to exist? So you're right; we'll need to face those questions.

But right now, we're dealing with this as a wait-and-see attitude, that the reconciliation deal has not actually been implemented yet. The president of the Palestinian Authority remains Mahmoud Abbas, the prime minister remains Salam Fayyad, and the government has not changed. I can go through the details, but I think you've heard them before from the podium on what we would do under different scenarios. But we will be judging our ability to provide assistance and have a relationship with the Palestinian government that might emerge from reconciliation based on the composition of that government in accordance with our law and our policy.

MR. TONER: Thank you. Next question.

OPERATOR: And this one comes from Laura Rozen. Your line is open.

QUESTION: Thanks. Thanks for doing this. My understanding of someone from the White House speaking to the Jewish groups, I think a week ago, was that the Palestinians and the Europeans have basically said we can work with the terms that Obama set out as parameters for negotiations and that the U.S. was kind of waiting on Israel to see if they would accept what Obama laid out as kind of principles for talks. Is that still the kind of — is it mostly you're waiting for Israel to see if the '67 with mutually agreed swaps would be an acceptable principle for returning to talks?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, we believe that the President's remarks in May in their totality provide a very strong foundation for a return to talks, and that is the tenor of our conversation with the parties is to see whether we can use that as a basis for breaking through this impasse.

I don't want to pick and choose different elements of what the President said. He carefully crafted this speech and I think made the tradeoffs he wished to make on them, and elaborating further on it is not going to be of any benefit. But we have reason to believe that there is a strong interest in finding a path forward, otherwise we would not be having these conversations.

MR. TONER: Thank you. And next question.

OPERATOR: And this one is from Mina al-Oraibi. Your line is open.

QUESTION: Hi, thanks for doing this. I have a couple of questions. The first is your meetings to come up with the Quartet and also consulting more widely with the Arabs, do you see that there's now a push for more of an international role, whereas previously we've been looking very much just at the U.S. taking the lead?

And also if I can ask you how you see the developments in the region are actually impacting any decisions made on the peace process, especially what's happening in Syria. Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thank you, Mina. Maybe I'll address the last question first. I think again in the President's speech he made a very clear connection between — and it was a significant theme of the speech — between the Arab Spring developments, the powerful forces calling for democratization and greater freedoms in this region, and the need to work for — on behalf of the Palestinian and Israelis so that there is a peaceful environment there as well. So we see, frankly, if anything, a greater urgency to working on peace on this issue than ever before.

As far as it goes in the case of Syria, our objective remains comprehensive peace, without question, and an Israeli-Syrian agreement is a component of that. But we can't really contemplate a peace negotiation with someone who is actively killing their own people, 1,300, as I understand it, up to date. So that's essentially going to be the situation there for now.

Your other question I guess — remind me — related to the international role versus a U.S. role. We don't see them as in conflict. The Quartet was founded in 2002, if my memory serves me, and I believe this Administration has committed to close consultation and work with the Quartet on a very strong basis. I personally have been taking the lead on that since 2009, and we have a very strong, I think, consensus within the Quartet on what we should be doing. The Quartet endorsed the President's speech the day after he delivered it, and we're going to continue to work with them.

We believe that an international role and an international consensus for our activities is of vital importance for success. So too is a strong Arab role, which is why I am in Cairo today, that Egypt traditionally has played a very important role in promoting peace and regional stability, and we believe that that role remains important to all of us, as is the case with other key Arab partners in peace with Israel, such as Jordan.

Thank you.

MR. TONER: Thanks. We're ready for the next question.

OPERATOR: And this one comes from Ms. Shohrhe Ares. Your line is open.

QUESTION: Yeah. My name is Shohrhe Ares with the Middle East News Agency. My question is: Do you expect a breakthrough in the Middle East peace process? What would be the impact of the declaration of Palestinian state on the process?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Well, what we're trying to work on here at this point is to see whether we can use the elements that the President has laid out as a foundation for a way to get over the impasse that we obviously face right now. I'm not in the business of predicting what we can do. To be honest, this is — requires a fair amount of determination and diligence to keep doing the hard work that's necessary to move forward.

The objective is, of course, to achieve a lasting peace that will have a state for the Palestinian people, just as there will be a state — as there is a state of Israel for the Jewish people. So we believe that the declarations now are not — unilaterally are not going to accomplish the goal, but a negotiation will bring about what we all know are the wishes of the Palestinian people and all of their supporters throughout the Middle East.

MR. TONER: Thanks. We have time for just a couple more questions. Next question?

OPERATOR: And this one comes from Corinne Lesnes. Your line is open.

QUESTION: Hi. Good morning. Thank you for doing that. I would like to know what to — a follow-up on Mina's question. What do you make of the French proposal of international conference before the end of July? Do you think it's dead now? And another quick thing, about your reaction to the op-ed in The Washington Post of the Saudi Prince Turki al-Faisal saying there would be consequences for the U.S.-Saudi relations if the U.S. vetoed the Palestinian state in the — at the UN in September. Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thank you. Well, we have close consultations with the French. We talk all the time. I was discussing this issue with my French counterparts just as recently as yesterday. And of course, they're represented in the Quartet through the European Union.

As far the specific French initiative goes — and this was a topic of discussion between Secretary Clinton and Foreign Minister Juppe a few weeks ago when he visited Washington — but just to reiterate what was said at the time, the fact is the parties have not agreed to resume negotiations. So if you're thinking about developing concepts like meetings or conferences, the reality is they have to be linked to willingness as we've developed and emerged from the parties to resume negotiations.

As I said in an answer to the earlier question, that's going to require a lot of persuasion and preliminary work if we're going to set up productive meetings between the parties, and I think our focus needs to be on that, and then later on, if we are to succeed, as we hope we will, we can work with our friends and make sure that we're thinking about how best to memorialize that and move forward.

Your other question I'm afraid I've forgotten, about Prince Turki, I believe, and his op-ed piece — I don't want to respond to specific op-ed pieces from different personalities. I'm not an expert on the U.S.-Saudi relationship, so I would defer, perhaps, your question later on today to the podium. But our effort is clearly to see if we can use the President's speech for a negotiating effort. That's the path forward to what the Palestinians say they want. President Abbas has said he supports that effort, and that's the foundation that we're working from.

MR. TONER: Thank you. And time for just one more question.

OPERATOR: This final question comes from Jay Solomon. Your line is open.

QUESTION: Thanks. Thanks for doing this. Catherine Ashton last — I guess about a week ago sent a letter to Secretary Clinton calling for a Quartet meeting within a few weeks in which she seemed to be saying they really wanted to formalize in sort of a statement the President's speech coupled together with some of the things the EU has put forth as far as kind of a framework for the negotiations.

Is that something the U.S. supports, sort of very — kind of formalizing the President's speech and almost like creating a document or some sort of really set parameters that the Quartet would put out to sort of bind the Israelis and the Palestinians in some sort of negotiating process?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: No. Well, I think the speech is powerful in and of itself and, I mean, this was a game-changing, historic development by our President. At this stage, I think I really can't address questions related to what we might do in the future with it. It's the ideas themselves and gaining the parties' acceptance for them in a detailed fashion and to see if there's — we can get agreement on that as a path forward. That's our focus.

And then I think we can easily anticipate that there will be strong support, I believe, from members of the Quartet and all those who wish this process well to look for ways to help support that. And the Quartet's already endorsed the President's speech, so that's helped us. And I think we'll look to the Quartet also to help us in the future. But I don't want to steer you one way or the other in detail on how we might craft that.

MR. TONER: Well, again, that's all we have time for this morning. I certainly do appreciate, Senior Administration Official, you taking time out to update us on your travels and your meetings to advance Middle East peace. And I thank all of the journalists who joined us this morning. We'll try to do these again going forward as periodic updates. Again, thanks to all, and have a good morning.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL: Thank you, Mark.

OPERATOR: This does conclude today's conference call. Thank you for joining, and you may disconnect your lines at this time.

MR. TONER: Thanks, all.

3. Preview of U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee Meeting (06-20-2011)

U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson
Senior Administration Officials on the Upcoming U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee Meeting

OPERATOR: Good afternoon and thank you for standing by. At this time, all participants are in a listen-only mode until the question and answer portion of the conference. During that time, if you would like to ask a question, please press *1 on your phone. I'd like to remind all parties this conference is being recorded. If you have any objections, you may disconnect at this time.

And now I'd like to turn the call over to your host today, Ms. Heide Fulton. Ma'am, you may begin.

MS. FULTON: All right, thank you. And thank you, everyone, for joining us this afternoon. We're very happy to have with us two senior Administration officials to talk to you today on background to preview tomorrow's U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee meeting, informally known as the 2+2 Ministerial. I'd be happy to reveal the names and titles of our speakers but just want to reiterate that this will be – the entire call will be conducted on background and the officials are to be referred to as senior Administration officials one and two, respectively.

Our first speaker will be Senior Administration Official One, who's the [title withheld]. And his counterpart, Senior Administration Official Two, [title withheld].

At this time, I'm going to turn it over first to Senior Administration Official One, but again, I just want to reiterate that this call will be on background.

All right, thank you. Senior Administration official number one.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL ONE: Thanks, Heide. Good afternoon, everybody. As Heide mentioned, tomorrow Secretary Clinton and Secretary Gates will host Foreign Minister

Matsumoto and Defense Minister Kitazawa for a really historic Security Consultative Committee meeting at the State Department. You'll hear us sometimes refer to the Security Consultative Committee as the SCC or sometimes more informally as the 2+2.

This is the first such meeting that we've had since May of 2007. The purpose of the 2+2 is to underscore the significance of the alliance in the years ahead, and to endorse and release a joint statement and associated documents that advance the alliance and sets its future agenda. The meeting has additional significance, of course, since it takes place three months after Japan's very tragic triple disaster – the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear power plant situation – which did result in unprecedented collaboration between the United States and Japanese governments.

The joint statement will reaffirm the U.S. commitment to a robust force posture in East Asia and will update the common strategic objectives for the alliance. It will also include steps to strengthen our bilateral alliance and outline alliance cooperation in a regional and global setting. We expect the discussions to focus on a wide range of bilateral, regional, and global issues, including the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, Afghanistan, missile defense technology transfer, and the realignment of our forces, particularly in Okinawa.

With that, let me turn it over to Senior Administration Official Two.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL TWO: Sure. Thanks, Senior Administration Official One. Just to echo what Senior Administration Official One offered, we expect that tomorrow's Security Consultative Committee meeting will underscore the strength and the vibrancy of the alliance and its role as the cornerstone of stability in the region. The scope of cooperation that will be highlighted in the joint statement that the two secretaries and the two ministers will issue tomorrow really illustrates that together the United States and Japan are addressing the region's most critical challenges and that, as Senior Administration Official One said, that we've emerged from the tragedy of March 11th stronger and more vital.

The common strategic objectives that will be issued by the 2+2 meeting will really cover the full breadth and scope of issues that are before the alliance, including the denuclearization of the – of North Korea, progress – continued progress in Afghanistan, access to what we refer to as the global commons, and a number of concrete steps that we're taking together for – to enhance alliance cooperation.

Lastly, the 2+2 meeting will reinforce the value of the U.S. forward presence in Japan, including on Okinawa, and that our forward deployed presence really serves as a critical element of our treaty commitment to defend Japan and to contribute to peace and security in East Asia, as well as the overall U.S. defense posture as a resonant civic power. And you will see in the announcements that the 2+2 will make tomorrow continued progress on the realignment roadmap as both sides seek to steadily implement our commitments under the realignment roadmap and under the May 28, 2010 joint statement.

That's it for me.

MS. FULTON: All right. Operator, I think we can open it up for questions.

OPERATOR: Thank you. At this time, if you would like to ask a question, please press *1 on your phone. You will be prompted to record your first and last name. To withdraw your request, press *2. Once again, to ask a question, please press *1 on your phone.

Your first question today comes from Shaun Tandon of AFP.

QUESTION: Yeah, hi. Thanks for doing this call. I just wanted to ask you a little bit more in detail when you talk about the realignment roadmap – as you know, there's been quite a bit of controversy in both countries now about the Futenma issue in particular, but about the realignment in general. Do you anticipate looking for some sort of new ideas on this, or do you anticipate looking purely at the 2006 agreement? I mean, how much are you going to be looking at it in terms of new ideas?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL TWO: Yeah. I'll take a first whack at that, and then Senior Administration Official One if you want to add anything. And I will speak purely with an eye on what's been going on in the United States. I'll leave it up to my Japanese colleagues to characterize Japanese politics. And let me simply say that, as I assume you're referring to the letter that the Department recently received from Senators Webb --

QUESTION: Sure.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL TWO: -- and McCain and some other activity up on Capitol Hill, that we very much appreciate the perspective of the senators. We very much understand the frustration that they feel, and they are raising a number of very legitimate questions. But from our perspective, we remain committed to the current plan to maintain a forward presence in the region and a forward presence that is geographically distributed, operationally resilient, and politically sustainable.

The agreements and policies that we currently have have been carefully developed over many years in close consultation and coordination between the United States and Japan and within the U.S. Government, including with our military services and with Congress, and we remain committed to our current approach.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL ONE: I don't have anything to add to that.

OPERATOR: Thank you. Your next question comes from Kevin Baron of Stars and Stripes.

QUESTION: Hi, gentleman. Thanks for the call. I wonder if you can comment on The New York Times reports from the defense minister saying that he feels that the realignment plan will be delayed. Are we going to see any kind of announcement of delay tomorrow, or is there an expectation that there's just no way to do what was supposed to be done by 2014?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL TWO: Well, I don't want to get ahead of anything that will be announced tomorrow, but let me say that I think it does not take a math prodigy to look at the calendar, look at the original timelines that were laid out, look at the progress that has been made, and make a determination about what can and can't be completed between now and 2014. So I think you can expect to see coming out of the meeting tomorrow a readjustment of the timeline going forward in a way that is more realistic and that will allow us to achieve our joint and mutual goals.

QUESTION: Okay. Thanks.

OPERATOR: Thank you. And once again, if you'd like to ask a question, please press *1 on your phone. Your next question comes from Matthew Pennington of the AP.

QUESTION: Yes. Hi. I'm following on from the last question. Will you give a specific new deadline, or will it be open-ended, just to say as soon as possible? That seemed to be the wording that the Japanese defense minister had expressed to the Okinawa governor last week.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL TWO: I think our approach, as we work this through the 2+2 tomorrow and into the next phase of our efforts to implement our – the agreement, is to develop a realistic timeline going forward that will allow us to achieve our goals and to meet the commitments that we have both made on Futenma and on the Futenma replacement facility.

QUESTION: So that means no specific time?

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL TWO: That means that we are working with the Government of Japan to develop a pathway forward that will allow us to meet our goals and our commitments.

QUESTION: Okay. Thank you.

OPERATOR: Your next question comes from Betty Lin of World Journal.

QUESTION: Hi. Thank you. I'd like to know whether you're going to discuss the East China Sea and South China Sea issues and how will you discuss that. Thank you.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL ONE: Betty, we'll talk about the full range of issues in the East Asia and Pacific region as well as some global issues. And certainly I would expect there to be a discussion on maritime security and issues along those lines. And so if it comes up, it will come up in that context.

OPERATOR: Thank you. Once again, if you would like to ask a question, please press *1 on your phone.

At this time, there are no further questions from the phone.

MS. FULTON: Well, if that's the case, gentlemen, I'd say that was short and sweet, and we'd like to thank our audience for participating, but we'll go ahead and wrap this up and move on.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL ONE: Okay. Thank you everybody. Bye-bye.

MS. FULTON: Thank you for your time.

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION OFFICIAL TWO: Thank you.

4. Secretary Clinton: "There Is No Going Back in Syria" (06-19-2011)

In an opinion article originally published June 18 in the [Asharq Al-Awsat](#) newspaper, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton condemns the recent violent crackdowns in Syria carried out by President Bashar Assad's government against its own citizens and calls for a transition to democracy.

As the violent crackdown in Syria continues, President Assad has shown that he is more interested in his own power than his people.

The world has joined Syrians in mourning the deaths of many innocent people, including a 13-year old boy who was brutally tortured and mutilated. Approximately thirteen hundred Syrians have been killed since protests began. Many thousands more have been jailed and abused. Syrian security forces have surrounded communities and cut off electricity, communications and the Internet. Economic activity has slowed, the country is increasingly isolated and its citizens are growing more frustrated every day.

In his May 19 speech, President Obama echoed demonstrators' basic and legitimate demands: the Assad government must stop shooting demonstrators, allow peaceful protest, release political prisoners, stop unjust arrests, give access to human rights monitors, and start an inclusive dialogue to advance a democratic transition. President Assad, he said, could either lead that transition or get out of the way.

It is increasingly clear that President Assad has made his choice. But while continued brutality may allow him to delay the change that is underway in Syria, it will not reverse it.

As Syria's neighbors and the international community respond to this crisis, we should be guided by the answers to several key questions: Why has it erupted? What does the crackdown reveal about President Assad and his regime? And where does Syria go from here?

First, there should be no doubt about the nature of the protests in Syria.

Like Tunisians, Egyptians, Libyans and others across the Middle East and North Africa, the Syrian people are demanding their long-denied universal rights and rejecting a government that rules through fear, squanders their talents through corruption, and denies them the dignity of having a voice in their own future. They are organizing themselves, including the local coordinating committees, and they are refusing to back down even in the face of revolting violence.

If President Assad believes that the protests are the work of foreign instigators – as his government has claimed – he is wrong. It is true that some Syrian soldiers have been killed, and we regret the loss of those lives too. But the vast majority of casualties have been unarmed civilians. By continuing to ban foreign journalists and observers, the regime seeks to hide these facts.

Second, President Assad is showing his true colors by embracing the repressive tactics of his ally Iran and putting Syria onto the path of a pariah state.

By following Iran's lead, President Assad is placing himself and his regime on the wrong side of history. He will learn that legitimacy flows from the consent of the people and cannot be forged through bullets and billyclubs.

President Assad's violent crackdown has shattered his claims to be a reformer. For years, he has offered pledges and promises, but all that matters are his actions. A speech, no matter how dutifully applauded by regime apologists, will not change the reality that the Syrian people, despite being told they live in a republic, have never had the opportunity to freely elect their leaders. These citizens want to see a real transition to democracy and a government that honors their universal rights and aspirations.

If President Assad believes he can act with impunity because the international community hopes for his cooperation on other issues, he is wrong about this as well. He and his regime are certainly not indispensable.

A Syria that is unified, pluralistic, and democratic could play a positive and leading role in the region, but under President Assad the country is increasingly becoming a source of instability. The refugees streaming into Turkey and Lebanon, and the tensions being stoked on the Golan, should dispel the notion that the regime is a bulwark of regional stability that must be protected.

Finally, the answer to the most important question of all – what does this mean for Syria's future? – is increasingly clear: There is no going back.

Syrians have recognized the violence as a sign of weakness from a regime that rules by coercion, not consent. They have overcome their fears and have shaken the foundations of this authoritarian system.

Syria is headed toward a new political order -- and the Syrian people should be the ones to shape it. They should insist on accountability, but resist any temptation to exact revenge or reprisals that might split the country, and instead join together to build a democratic, peaceful and tolerant Syria.

Considering the answers to all these questions, the United States chooses to stand with the Syrian people and their universal rights. We condemn the Assad regime's disregard for the will of its citizens and Iran's insidious interference.

The United States has already imposed sanctions on senior Syrian officials, including President Assad. We are carefully targeting leaders of the crackdown, not the Syrian people. We welcomed the decisions by the European Union to impose its own sanctions and by the UN Human Rights Council to launch an investigation into abuses. The United States will continue coordinating closely with our partners in the region and around world to increase pressure on and further isolate the Assad regime.

The Syrian people will not cease their demands for dignity and a future free from intimidation and fear. They deserve a government that respects its people, works to build a more stable and prosperous country, and doesn't have to rely on repression at home and antagonism abroad to maintain its grip on power. They deserve a nation that is unified, democratic and a force for stability and progress. That would be good for Syria, good for the region and good for the world.

5. Assad Regime, Not Protesters, Destabilizing Syria, U.S. Says (06-17-2011)

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — U.S. officials condemned the Syrian government's continued violence against its citizens as "appalling repression," and said the government led by Bashar al-Assad is destabilizing the country with its security forces and is putting Syria on a path to becoming a pariah state.

Speaking via teleconference from Washington June 17, a senior State Department official who asked not to be identified said the Syrian people are "demanding their legitimate rights — rights that been denied for 30 years," and for the past three months have been voicing their frustration at the Assad regime's corruption, repression and the abuses by its secret police.

The Assad government has blamed both outside terrorism and sectarian motives as explanations for the unrest, but the official said, "What we've seen develop is that the regime itself and its repression are the sources of the instability."

The official said the Assad government is "exacerbating the sectarian tensions on the ground by the very actions that they're taking," and that U.S. officials have noticed an "interesting phenomenon" where protests turn violent only when security services are present.

June 17 saw assaults and shootings in some parts of Syria, with reports of 19 dead, while protests were allowed to occur peacefully in Hama and in suburbs of Damascus.

"Where the security services have pulled out, the demonstrations are peaceful," the official said. "While we don't discount the fact that there have been sometimes demonstrators that shoot on the security services, what starts this momentum is when the security services themselves seem to initiate the violence, based on what we've seen on the ground today."

Since the violence against the protesters began, the United States has issued sanctions against top Syrian officials, including President Assad, and on entities such as the Quds Force of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps. The official said Iran has been supporting the Syrian government's crackdown with advice and equipment.

The European Union has also imposed sanctions, and the U.N. Human Rights Council has called for an investigation into human rights abuses. In recent days, Turkey and Arab League Secretary-General Amr Moussa have also condemned Syria's actions. The official said the growing international response indicates that "by the actions he's taking, Assad is putting his country clearly on the path to become a pariah state."

The international community seeks to support the Syrian peoples' demands for universal rights and the start of a political transition from its closed one-party structure, the official said.

"The Syrian people themselves are the ones that are driving the agenda, that are making the demands, that are expressing their views, that are reacting to the repression," the official said.

In response to the violence, more than 8,000 Syrians have fled to Turkey. The official said the Obama administration is in close contact with the Turkish government and is "prepared to be responsive to ... any request that the Turkish government may make of us or to ask our help with the international community to respond."

A second senior official said the Obama administration is considering additional measures to increase pressure on the Syrian regime, such as evaluating whether its actions constitute war crimes and could be referred to international judicial bodies. Also under consideration are “additional economic steps, and one in particular has to do with the oil and gas sector in Syria,” the official said.

The United States has worked with France and the United Kingdom on a U.N. Security Council resolution on Syria. State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton telephoned Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov earlier June 17 to discuss how they could work together to get a resolution passed.

“Discussions continue in New York ... and we’re working individually with the various members of the U.N. Security Council on a text,” Nuland said. “The secretary’s diplomacy today with Foreign Minister Lavrov was in support of that resolution effort, and the work continues.”

In Geneva June 17, Ambassador Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe, the U.S. representative to the U.N. Human Rights Council, told reporters the council had met to follow up on a [special April 29 session](#) in which it condemned Syria’s violent response to peaceful protests and called for an investigation into human rights abuses.

The Human Rights Council “had a follow-up action in this session to further reinforce and put pressure on the Assad regime, that the atrocities there have to halt,” Donahoe said. “I think it’s very significant that we continue to be able to put pressure on the Assad regime and that cross-regionally we’ve got widespread understanding that they’ve lost legitimacy and that they are going to be held responsible for the atrocities that are taking place there.”

6. Commander Outlines Situation in Southwest Afghanistan (06-16-2011)

By Karen Parrish
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – Key areas in Afghanistan’s Helmand and Nimroz provinces are likely candidates for the second or third rounds of transition to Afghan security, the U.S. commander there said today.

Marine Corps Maj. Gen. John A. Toolan Jr., commander of Regional Command Southwest, briefed Pentagon reporters by video uplink from his Helmand province headquarters at Camp Leatherneck.

Helmand’s capital of Lashkar Gah is designated as one of the first to transition in July, and security efforts in districts including Reg-e Khan Neshin, Garmshir, Nawa and Marjah have been a “tremendous success” over the past two years, he said.

“Many of those districts will be identified for transition in lead security in either the next tranche or the following tranche,” the commander said, noting the next rounds of security transition lead will likely be in January or February and July of 2012.

Toolan took command in March of a force that includes 30,000 service members from the United States, United Kingdom, Estonia, Denmark, the Republic of Georgia, Bahrain and Tonga. Coalition forces in the two provinces are partnered with the Afghan army’s 215th Corps.

The year's poppy and wheat harvests are complete and the fighting season is now under way in his area, Toolan said. He added that his objective over the next six months is to "deepen the hold" coalition and Afghan forces have established in the central Helmand River Valley.

"We need to thicken our hold in some places, mostly in the north," the general said.

Troop operations over the summer and into the fall will focus on strengthening security in the upper Sangin and upper Goresh Valleys, Toolan said, as well as in the area around the Kajaki Dam, which supplies power and irrigation to districts farther south.

Toolan cited reducing funding for insurgent activity in the south as a major accomplishment in the region.

"We've been able to do that by attacking the narcotics nexus," he said, "that combination of Taliban insurgent and narcotics producer."

Since April, coalition and Afghan forces have seized some 30,000 tons of poppies, with an estimated market value of \$65 million, he said.

While some estimates put 30,000 tons as only 2 percent of the total harvest, the general said, "We can tell just by intelligence gathering that it's had a significant impact, particularly in the south."

Toolan said security transition around Lashkar Gah is going well, but he expects insurgents to attack the area and try to reduce the local population's confidence in the government.

"I think we have a pretty good plan in place," he said. "We won't let the transition in Lashkar Gah fail."

As security transition efforts move ahead in Helmand and Nimroz, Toolan said, one key issue will be progress among the Afghan police, who will be responsible for protecting the population and securing justice.

"There are some things, some perceptions that need to be overcome with the police," he said. "But we see progress."

Toolan said the security transfer in Lashkar Gah will involve building more checkpoints around the city by January. Those checkpoints will be manned by Afghan army troops, and gradually taken over by police forces. Eventually, he said, the police will phase back from the checkpoints into local precincts.

"That's going to take time, and I would suspect that the full transition ... will probably take a good year, year-and-a-half," the general said.

The projected total end strength for Afghan army and police forces this year is 352,000, he said, and the army is "moving along incredibly well."

"The majority of them ... are operating at pretty good capacity," Toolan said. "They're well trained; they generally have a second-grade reading level, and they've got some good leadership development going."

The general said over the next year and through 2014, when Afghan forces are set to assume security responsibility throughout the country, coalition combat troops need to assume a more advisory role to ensure their Afghan counterparts gain the experience they need.

While progress in Afghanistan has often been called fragile and reversible, Toolan said, "I think what we really mean is that the local nationals can easily be intimidated by insurgents moving into their areas."

The Afghan local police program recruits young men, approved by and often related to their tribal elders, to help protect their own villages from insurgent intimidation, he said.

"But if they're not able to stand up, or if they are co-opted by the insurgents, then that fragility ... occurs," he said. "It becomes a problem, then, to get back into the villages and try to re-establish a secure environment."

The most-difficult challenge is convincing the people they can stand up to insurgents, Toolan said.

The Afghan central government has a vital responsibility to strengthen its effectiveness at the village, district and provincial levels, he said.

Helmand's governor and district councils are working effectively with coalition forces, the U.S. commander said.

"The real challenge will come as more and more is turned over to the national government," Toolan said. "Direction has to be fed through the national government down through the various ministry pipelines."

Toolan said civilian mentorship from the British-led provincial reconstruction team, the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development are crucial to developing Afghan governmental capacity.

"The provincial reconstruction team, with augmentation from coalition forces, is about 200 people," he said. "The regional platform, which is our State Department-run organization, is currently about 35 people but is going to increase ... to about 75 or 80."

As more civilians join the effort, Toolan said, it's vital to bring in people with the right skills: those who can mentor Afghan agricultural experts, engineers and financiers.

"That's how I think we'll make greater progress," he said. "My hope is that, on the civilian surge side, is that we bring in those aggressive, hungry, talented people who will drive that mentoring and advising role with the Afghans."

[NATO International Security Assistance Force](#)

[Afghan Situation Continues to Improve, Chairman Says](#) (06-15-2011)

7. New Cybersecurity Effort (06-16-2011)

By John D. Banusiewicz
American Forces Press Service

PARIS, June 16, 2011 – Deputy Defense Secretary William J. Lynn III outlined a pilot program here today in which the government helps the defense industry in safeguarding the information their computer systems hold.

In a keynote address at the Center for Strategic Decision Research's 28th International Workshop on Global Security, Lynn described Defense Industrial Base Cyber Pilot -- called "DIB Cyber Pilot" for short -- in which the Defense Department, in partnership with the Department of Homeland Security, shares classified threat information and the know-how to employ it with participating defense companies or their Internet service providers to help them in defending their computer networks from attack or exploitation.

"Our defense industrial base is critical to our military effectiveness. Their networks hold valuable information about our weapons systems and their capabilities," Lynn said. "The theft of design data and engineering information from within these networks greatly undermines the technological edge we hold over potential adversaries."

Current countermeasures have slowed exploitation of U.S. defense industry networks, but haven't stopped it, the deputy secretary told the audience, leading to DIB Cyber Pilot's establishment last month with a handful of defense-industry companies, all of which volunteered for the program.

"By furnishing network administrators with this threat intelligence," he said, "we will be able to strengthen the existing cyber defenses at defense companies."

Lynn emphasized that the government will not monitor, intercept or store any private-sector communications through the program. Rather, he said, threat intelligence provided by the government is helping the companies themselves, or the Internet service providers working on their behalf, to identify and stop malicious activity within their networks. The pilot is voluntary for all participants, he added.

Lynn expressed the hope that DIB Cyber Pilot could serve as an example of how a larger effort aimed at protecting the nation's critical infrastructure -- its power grid, transportation system, financial system and other components -- might work.

"Although this pilot breaks new ground on several fronts, we have a long way to go, and a lot of work to do, before our critical infrastructure will be fully secure," he said. "But by establishing a lawful and effective framework for the government to help operators of one critical infrastructure sector defend their networks, we hope the DIB Cyber Pilot can be the beginning of something bigger. It could serve as a model that can be transported to other critical infrastructure sectors, under the leadership of the Department of Homeland Security."

Meanwhile, Lynn said, attacks on military networks pose a growing threat.

"Information technologies have revolutionized how our militaries organize, train and equip," he said. "They are at the core of our most important military capabilities: communications, command and control, navigation, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. But for all the military capability that information technology enables, it also introduces vulnerabilities."

“We learned this lesson in 2008 when a foreign intelligence agency used a thumb drive to penetrate our classified computer systems -- something we thought was impossible,” he continued. “It was our worst fear: a rogue program operating silently on our system, poised to deliver operational plans into the hands of an enemy.”

Network exploitation -- the theft of data from both government and commercial networks -- has been the most prevalent cyber threat to date, Lynn said. Foreign intelligence services have stolen military plans and weapons systems designs, and valuable source code and intellectual property has been stolen from business and universities. Recent intrusions at the International Monetary Fund, Lockheed Martin and Citibank join others in the oil and gas sector, at Nasdaq and at Google as further, troubling instances of a widespread and serious phenomenon, he added.

“This kind of cyber exploitation does not have the dramatic impact of a conventional military attack,” Lynn said. “But over the long term, it has a corrosive effect that in some ways is more damaging. It blunts our edge in military technology and saps our competitiveness in the global economy.”

Though exploitation has been the most common type of attack, the deputy secretary said, network disruption has emerged as a second cyber threat. In this type of attack, he explained, intruders seek to deny or degrade the use of important government or commercial networks. Such attacks occurred against Estonia in 2007 and against Georgia in 2008, he added, and an attack targeting eBay and PayPal was along similar lines.

“To this point, the disruptive attacks we have seen are relatively unsophisticated in nature, largely reversible, and short in duration,” Lynn said. “But in the future, more capable adversaries could potentially immobilize networks on an even wider scale, for longer periods of time.”

A third type of cyber attack -- destruction -- is the most dangerous because it uses cyber tools to cause physical damage, Lynn said.

“This development -- which would mark a strategic shift in the cyber threat -- is only just emerging,” he said. “But when you look at what tools are available, it is clear that this capability exists. It is possible to imagine attacks on military networks or on critical infrastructure like the transportation system and energy sector that cause severe economic damage, physical destruction or even loss of life.”

Lynn acknowledged the possibility that a destructive cyber attack might never take place.

“Regrettably, however, few weapons in the history of warfare, once created, have gone unused,” he added. “For this reason, we must have the capability to defend against the full range of cyber threats.”

As the cyber threat continues to move up a ladder of escalation from exploitation to disruption and, ultimately, to destruction, Lynn said, the groups that possess these capabilities also are likely to expand in dangerous directions.

The highest levels of cyber capabilities reside almost entirely in sophisticated nation-states, and so far, they primarily have deployed their capabilities to exploit and occasionally disrupt networks, rather than to destroy them, Lynn said.

“Although we cannot dismiss the threat of a rogue state lashing out, most nations have no more interest in conducting a destructive cyber attack against us than they do a conventional military attack,” he said. “The risk for them is too great. Our military power provides a strong deterrent. ... We nevertheless must prepare for the likelihood that cyber attacks will be part of any future conventional conflict. We need cyber capabilities that will allow us to deter and to defend against the most skilled nation-state.”

However, Lynn added, the threat of a terrorist group gaining disruptive or destructive cyber capabilities may be the greater and more immediate concern.

“Al-Qaida, which has vowed to unleash cyber attacks, has not yet done so,” he said. “But it is possible for a terrorist group to develop cyber attack tools on their own or to buy them on the black market. The nature of cyber is that a couple dozen talented programmers, using off-the-shelf equipment, can inflict a lot of damage. Moreover, with few tangible assets to lose in a confrontation, terrorists groups are very difficult to deter.

“We have to assume that in cyber, as in other areas, if terrorists have the means to strike, they will do so,” Lynn added.

Biographies: [William J. Lynn III](#)

Special Report: [Cyber security](#)
